

LEFT'S COURT VICTORY

A RIOT CHARGE against seven anti-apartheid demonstrators, including Enfield IS member Sean Thomson, was thrown out by a jury at the Old Bailey on Monday after a mammoth four-week trial estimated to have cost the state more than £100,000.

Two of the defendants, Ed Davoren and Ken Murray, were found guilty on charges of assaulting two policemen and received suspended sentences of six months each. All the other charges including attempted burglary, assault and possessing offensive weapons, arising out of a demonstration outside South Africa House last January, were dismissed.

The failure of the state to convict these seven militants of riot, despite the use of the chief state prosecutor (official title Chief Treasury Prosecutor) and the calling of Elwyn Jones, head of Special Branch as star prosecution witness, is a major victory for the Left. It is clear that the trial was seen as creating a precedent which would allow the police to bring a charge of riot (maximum penalty life imprisonment) against almost anyone taking part in a demonstration. The decision will come as a blow to the police who in recent weeks have been throwing riot charges at almost every demonstrator in sight.